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1918

Rimes  
in  
Olive Drab



Sergeant John Pierre Roche



Class PS 3535

Book .027 R5

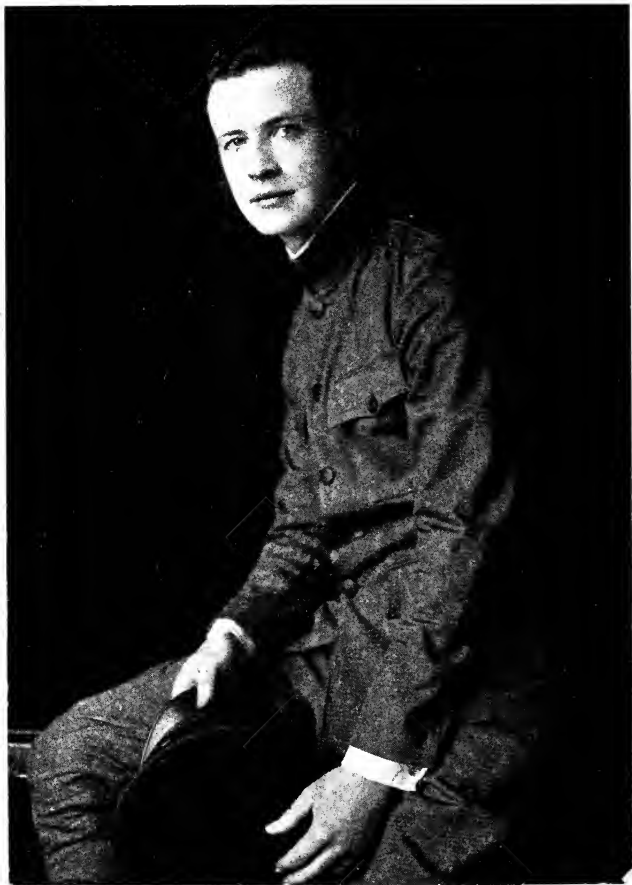
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Sincerely,  
John Dimes Roche..

**RIMES**  
**IN**  
**OLIVE DRAB**



*By* **SERGEANT**  
**JOHN PIERRE ROCHE**

PS 3535  
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no. 1

## *To the American Foreign Legion*

God of might, give me the force of an arm  
Strong enough to wither when I strike;  
God of right, keep me freed from harm  
That I may die as I should like.

I ask no craven's freedom from the toll  
Of the legions marching towards the night,  
But when my name is added to the scroll,  
Grant I have struck and struck with might.

God of might, save me from a weakling's spleen,  
Give me the chance to strike as does a man—  
Not as a cog in a drilled machine,  
But in single fury as a freeman can.

God of right, do not keep me long  
From skulking death, if it lie in wait.  
Lord, let me shout in Victory's song,  
Or be swept aside by an equal hate.

*God of might, hear my plea;  
Keep me not from the strife and fray;  
Let me strike, O God of right,  
This very day, this very day!*

## *A Polish Alliance*

Romance has come into my life  
And come its way a-winging;  
Elusive sprite so often sought,  
And so my heart is singing.  
I never thought that I should meet  
My fate while clad in khaki,  
Because, remodel as you may,  
This issue stuff is tacky;  
But love is here and here to stay,  
To have and hold unending—  
I'll woo and win this latest love  
Against the world contending.

No Norman maid has found her way  
Into my heart's abysses;  
No English girl has made me hers;  
In fact, no foreign misses  
Could claim the niche that this love owns  
Who makes my life so zestful,  
And yet I'll say my new love's name  
Is in a way distressful.  
I only hope my love's returned,  
He's but a simple rookie—  
A former Harvey chef who's now  
Warsinski, our new "cookie"!

## *To a Crowd in a Cabaret*

The flash of flesh and shaded lights,  
The crack of corks and glutton's fare;  
The fog of smoke and laughter shrill:  
Is it for these that we prepare?

The shift of feet and rhythmic beat  
Of banjo, drums and saxaphones,  
With swaying forms in serried throng:  
Is it for these that France atones?

The preening glance and rounder's stare,  
The whirl and swirl of song and dance;  
"To jazz and jest!" with brimming glass:  
Is it for these they die in France?

## *A Year From Now*

There is a pine tree  
Standing in the moonlight  
Where, from my tent,  
I can see it lift its head  
Against the sky,  
Standing guard over men  
Who, a year from now,  
May know such beauty  
Only through the voice  
Of others.

Down the Company street  
A Victrola is playing—  
Julia Claussen is singing  
An aria from "Samson and Delilah"  
Yet, a year from now,  
Those listening men  
May hear only  
The wobbling hiss  
Of gas shells.

In a tent across the way,  
A crowd of rookies  
Are singing  
"Good-bye Broadway—Hello France"  
With great gusto;  
And yet, a year from now,  
Those fresh young voices  
May be mute.

## *To a Violinist*

(now a "buck private")

The throbbing tone of a violin  
    With the tingling thrill of the concert hall,  
Played to a group in a trooper's tent,  
    To ears attuned to a bugle call;  
A melody wrung by his fleeting bow  
    With master touch and facile ease,  
To wing its way through the flapping walls—  
    A Kreisler Caprice—his "Viennese".

As his fingers stop on the lilting strings  
    To touch a note to glowing life,  
It seems to be unthinking waste  
    To pledge this gift in futile strife—  
A genius risked against a shell,  
    A talent thrown without a thought  
On scales now bent with human weight—  
    Is peace to be so dearly bought?

## *To our Indulgent Friends*

*"Today I got your letter,  
Saying that a sweater  
Was on its way to me"—*

(This makes the fifth that's flitting  
Our way from angels knitting  
For those to cross the sea)

*"The wristlets are essential"—*  
(And yet a penitential  
Feeling fills our breast,  
To think that we have seven,  
Or maybe it's eleven,  
Already in our chest)

*"The 'cigs' are just a blessing"—*  
(Emotions quite distressing  
Confound us as we think  
Of "smokes" beyond computing,  
And all the artful looting  
We've done with pen and ink)

The things they send to rookies,  
From sleeping bags to cookies,  
They come on every mail.  
A ton of stuff we're stacking,  
And when it comes to packing  
We'll have to hold a sale.

### L'ENVOI

*Kind friends, accept our thanks,  
But General Orders say  
A hundred pounds is all  
That we may take away;  
So kindly, if you will,  
Abstain from an addition  
To what we have, until  
We get a Lieut's commission.*

## *The Latest Horror of War*

*"Two hundred delegates to the Middlesex County W. C. T. U. assembled for their annual meeting in the First Baptist Church at Watertown adopted resolutions condemning the practice of sending gifts of tobacco to soldiers and sailors. Dr. Louis Rand of Newton, who presented the resolutions, spoke of the injurious effects of tobacco and urged the women to send books instead."—News Item.*

It's mighty nice to know,  
When muck you're wading through,  
That your health is in the hands  
Of watchful ladies, who  
Are hep that nicotine  
Is worse than German spleen  
And are shipping books for you  
To the land of parlez-vous.

When frozen to the waist  
By a wind that's whistling keen,  
There's nothing quite so sweet  
As a book by Laura Jean;  
When shells are whizzing past,  
A Chambers, yes, his last,  
Or Anna Katherine Green,  
Will brighten up the scene.

When sleeping in the rain  
Although the light is dim,  
Just read a page or two  
In "They" or maybe "Kim";  
And when gassed by nitric shells  
With every breath a stab,  
Try some of James' gab,  
Pick up "The Book of Kells"  
Or the latest thing by Wells!

#### L'ENVOI

Listen, ladies, there's cussing enough in the army now, but if you want the boys to put some real pep in their profanity, just keep on powwowing about your dream of a smokeless army reading Browning and Shaw. The solacing whiff of a "cig" isn't such a hell of a lot to give to a man expected to kill or be killed; and you never saw a bunch of soldiers try to take your tea away and yet you hit the feathers early, get your three squares on a china plate and don't have to mount guard or do "kitchen police"; to say nothing of hiking, drilling or going over the top. It is silly to yap about the baneful effects of nicotine upon a pair of lungs that ten seconds after the last "drag" on a cigarette may be blown to blazes. It's too bad to have to talk this way to a lot of ladies who have been raised nice, and who have good ideas on how to run a Sunday school, but when you think that some day our men over there may be feeding the hungry maw of a machine gun, with their tongues hanging out for a smoke, and not get it, just because a lot of hearth-warmers somewhere in Massachusetts framed up a nutty resolution, you can't blame us for treating you rough, can you?

## *The White Feather*

When England asked her sons  
To take up arms again,  
One brother said good-bye  
At dawn in the drizzling rain;  
And his step on the creaking stair  
Will never echo there

Again. Before he left  
He sat at his desk and wrote  
To his brother in the States—  
A simple, scrawling note  
To the brother who had spent  
His youth with him—and sent

It overseas. He wrote:  
“You know our plighted word  
To stand as one and fight,  
No matter what occurred—  
And now we see the day  
We sought in boyish play,

So come.” The letter sped  
Across the seas, and he  
Went out, as gentry do,  
In all fidelity  
To wait for the rendezvous—  
To wait and wonder, too.

He went and played the game,  
As any Eton lad  
Is taught to play, and stayed  
To give the best he had,  
Feeling that their troth  
Would surely bind them both;

And then his answer came  
From the brother overseas:  
He regretted—yes—and yet,  
So understand him please!

.....  
But his brother only knew  
That he must serve for two.

Through two campaigns he went,  
To see his comrades die;  
And then in the Dardanelles  
He met the Reaper's eye—  
And died in the drizzling rain,  
Crushed and torn with pain.

To the brother overseas  
Came a letter from the dead—  
Clutched in a steely grip,  
Its corners tinged with red—  
And when he tore the flap  
No writing met his sight,  
But on the floor there fell  
A single feather—*white!*

## *Honorably Discharged*

With the pallor  
Of the hospital  
In their thin cheeks—  
Dull-eyed and insecure  
Of step, they come  
With their discharges.

Freed from the internment  
Of the base hospital,  
Foot-loose to go  
Where they will;  
To the hubbub of the city,  
To office or lathe,  
Or to the even days  
Of life in Vandalia,  
Or Cairo or Belvidere—  
Their journey ended  
Before its beginning.

With the surgeon's indictment  
In their hands,  
They sag against the wall—  
The salvage of War.

## *Carpe Diem*

Out from the House of Life into the Night of Chance  
To walk untrodden ways as toys of Circumstance.

*What does the morrow hold?  
Who can tell—who shall say  
When reckoned by a score  
We total day by day.*

Through labyrinths unknown we stumble, plunge ahead,  
And some will pass unhurt while others greet the dead.

*What does the scorer say?  
Why try to answer yet—  
We will not be afraid  
Until the Thing is met.*

We find in us the key to sacrifices new,  
So when we meet with death, it may be simple, too.

*What does the cryptic read?  
Conjecture as you may—  
Come link arms with Life;  
Live gladly for today!*

## *Trains*

Over thousands of miles  
Of shining steel rails,  
Past green and red semaphores  
And unheeding flagmen,  
Trains are running,  
Trains, trains, trains.

Rattling through tunnels  
And clicking by way stations,  
Curving through hills, past timber,  
Out into the open places,  
Flashing past silos and barns  
And whole villages,  
Until finally they echo  
Against the squat factories  
That line the approach to the cities.

Trains, trains, trains  
With the fire boxes wide open,  
Giant Moguls and old-time Baldwins  
And oil-burners on the Southern Pacific,  
Fire boxes wide open  
Flaring against the night,  
Like a tremendous watch fire  
Where the sentries cluster at their post.

Trains, trains, trains  
Serpentine strings of cars  
Loaded with boys and men—  
The legion of the ten-year span  
To whom has been given the task  
Of seeking the Great Adventure.

Swaying through the North and South,  
And East and West,  
Freighted with the Willing  
And the Unwilling;  
Packed with the Thinking  
And the Unthinking,  
Pushing on to the Unknown  
Away from the shelter and security  
Of the accustomed into the Great Adventure.

Trains, trains, trains  
With their coach sides scrawled  
With chalked bravado and, sometimes,  
With their windows black  
With yelling boys,  
In open-mouthed exultation  
That they do not feel,  
Rushing further and further  
From the known into the unseeable.

Trains, trains, trains  
With sky-larking boys in khaki,  
Munching sandwiches and drinking pop;  
Or, tired and without their depot swagger,  
Curled up on the red-plush seats;  
Or asleep, with a stranger, in the Pullmans.

They rush past our camp,  
Which lies against the railroad,  
With the crossing alarm jangling caution  
And fade into the dust or night,  
Leaving us to conjecture where  
As they have left others to wonder—  
As they must wonder themselves  
When they are done  
With the shouting and hand-shaking  
And kissing and hat-waving and singing.

Trains, trains, trains  
Clicking on into unforecasted days—  
Away from the shelter and security  
Of the accustomed into the Great Adventure.

## *On Guard*

A cloudless sky of peaceful stars  
Above a camp in tranquil rest;  
The keen wind stirs the pine trees,  
And the white road stretches on  
Like a path to the warring world.

Halt! Who goes there?

Was it nothing but the wind?  
There is a shadow on the grass  
And the crunch of brush underfoot.

Advance, friend, and be recognized!

*Let us see the Future's face:  
See if it is friend or foe;  
Let us tear its mask away—  
If this is Fate, then tell us so!*

## *Mike Dillon, Doughboy*

Mike Dillon was a doughboy  
and wore the issue stuff;  
He wasn't much to look at—  
in fact, was rather rough;  
He served his time as rookie—  
at drilling in the sun,  
And cleared a lot of timber  
and polished up his gun.

Mike Dillon was a private  
with all the word entails;  
He cussed and chewed tobacco  
and overlooked his nails.  
You never saw Mike Dillon  
at dances ultra nice;  
In fact, inspection found him  
enjoying body lice.

If Mike had married money  
or had a little drag,  
He might have got a brevet  
and missed a little "fag";  
But as a social figure  
he simply wasn't there—  
So Mike continued drilling  
and knifing up his fare.

In course of time they shipped 'em  
and shipped 'em over where  
A man like Mike can sidestep  
the frigid social stare,  
And do the job of soldier  
without the fancy frills,  
And keep a steady footing  
in the pace that really kills.

Now Mike did nothing special;  
he only did his best:  
He stuck and "went on over"—  
and got it in the chest;  
Played it fair and squarely  
without a social air,  
And Mike is now in Heaven  
And at least a Corporal there!

## *The 108th Engineers Passes*

The staccato of drums,  
Beat upon beat;  
Lines of legs  
That flash apart  
And close again  
To flash apart  
In swinging step;  
The crisp fanfare  
Of strident bugles  
Above the sharp crash  
Of drums;  
Rifles a-slant,  
With bayonets  
A single flash in the sun.  
A blotch of red  
On an orderly's arm—  
The splash of colors  
Against the dust,  
And legs flashing  
As one.....

Down the road  
The dull beat  
Of drums  
And the fading cadence  
Of bugles.

## *Life as a Gage You Flung*

There in an alien land,  
Quiet you lie,  
Alien no longer now  
For you and I;  
Fragrant the thoughts of you,  
Rare was your soul;  
Life as a gage you flung,  
Facing the goal.

Life as a gage you flung,  
Flung as a rose;  
Gave it as gentry do,  
Gladly to those  
Who gave their glowing youth  
Gladly as you.  
Live in the heart of me—  
I gave you, too.

## *With Guidons Flying Red*

Into the clouds of stifling dust  
With guidons flying red;  
With trombone and trumpet  
Flashing through the mirage,  
Leading the shadowy silhouette  
Of troopers riding on  
Into the swirling dust;  
With the sea-beat of caissons,  
A deeper note against  
The shouts of command  
And clattering hoof beats,  
The Battery goes.

Into the clouds of swirling dust—  
Choking, sight-blearing dust—  
A-top of jolting caissons  
Which rumble on relentlessly  
Until the silhouette is blurred  
And gone—gone with the gleam of silver  
And guidons flying red.

Into the clouds of whirling dust  
Goes the Battery on its hike,  
And back through the dust  
It will come—with the grumble  
Of caissons and clatter  
Of hoof beats and shouted commands;  
With trombone and trumpet  
Gleaming at the column's head.

But some dull morning,  
Into the mire of Flanders Field  
(Instead of the dust of this mimic march)  
With no guidons flying red  
And no silver gleam at the column's head,  
The Battery will go—  
A shadowy silhouette  
Of troopers riding on.

## *The Mystery of the Mess Fund*

A cussing crew of "truckies" fetched from  
San Antone

Where God Almighty's sunshine burned 'em  
to the bone;

A fighting bunch of reg'lars shooting craps  
and Mex,

And driving o. d. Packards through mud  
above their necks.

When messing all together down in San  
Antone,

They had a whoppin' mess fund (each com-  
pany has its own);

Then orders came to leave there; so they  
cut the crew in twain

And some drove up to Houston and some  
went east by train.

But the bunch that hit it eastwards took the  
fund along,  
While the crew that came to Houston found  
the money gone;  
So somewhere on Long Island a crew is  
messaging right,  
While somewhere down in Texas a crew is  
nursing spite.

### L'ENVOI

Now I'm not exactly yellow,  
But I'd still donate my chance  
Of standing within gunshot  
When those "truckies" meet in France.

## *“You Were So White, So Soft”*

I knew your gentle touch  
Through all those many years—  
Unheeding then, but now  
How memory endears  
That golden span of time  
And makes me wish anew  
That, since you could not come,  
I might have stayed with you.

We said good-bye, and yet  
I went without a thought  
Of what my going meant,  
Or how you held me taut;  
And yet the thought of you  
Each night repose defeats—  
Oh, would I knew again  
The luxury of sheets!

## To F. K. M.

The earth lies stark in its dreary shroud,  
As dead as the buds that flowered May.  
The moon is wrapped in a fleeing cloud;  
O, for the song of your voice!

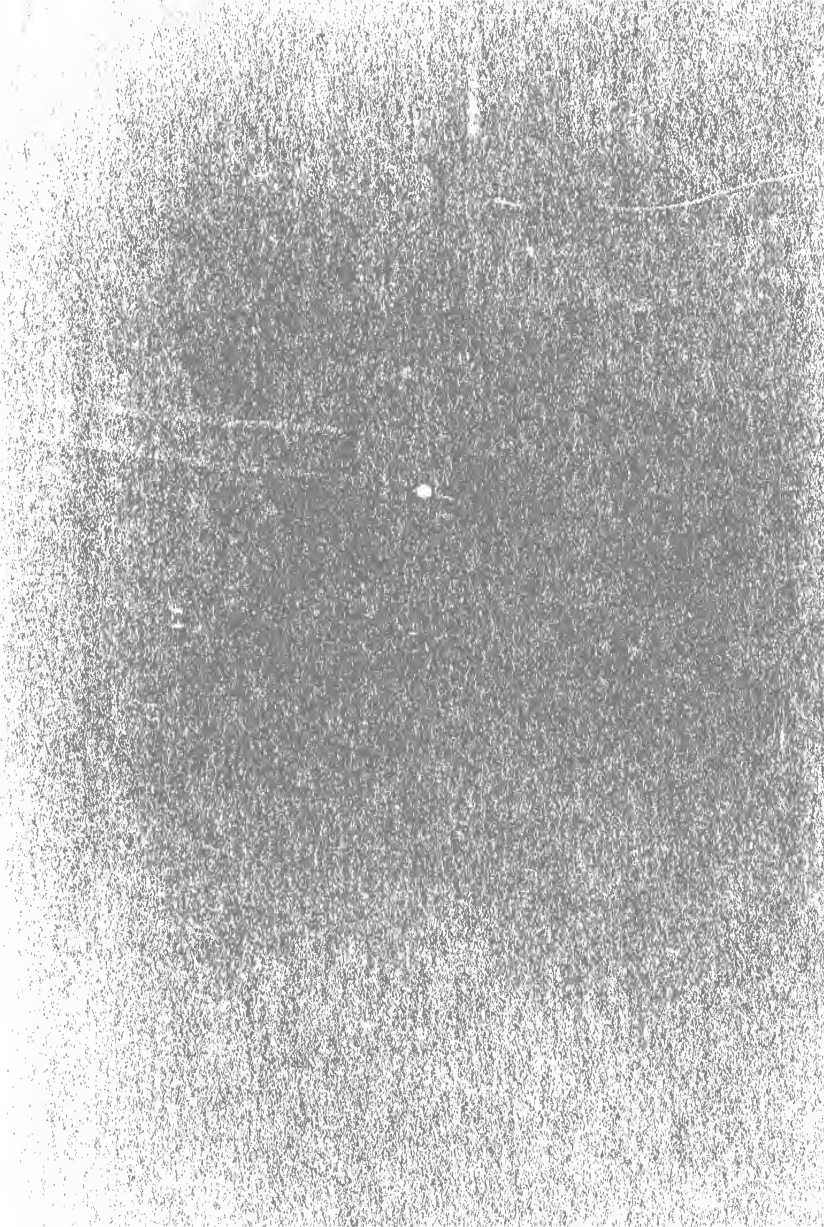
*You had love in your voice  
So thrillingly true,  
That the pipes of Pan  
Were an echo of you!*

My heart grows cold in fright of the blast,  
Like the cry of a loon in a haunted house  
Is the voice of the wind as it rushes past;  
O, for the touch of your hand!

*You had June in your heart  
And beauty so rare,  
That the roses of God  
Bent low in despair!*

My soul is numbed by the chill of the night;  
A lonely mourner on a lonely hill,  
I stand and watch a phantom light;  
O, for the warmth of your lips!









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